CBS NEWS SPECIAL REPORT- DEATH OF RONALD REAGAN (6-5-2004)

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From Saturday, June 5th, 2004 CBS NEWS Special Report covering the death of the 40th President of the United States, Ronald W, Reagan, Reagan died at 1:09 P.M P.T/4:09 P.M E.T at the age of 93 at his home in California.

- Coverage runs from 4:55 P.M E.T - 5:21 P.M E.T

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assassin john hinckley only a quick dash to the hospital saved his life just four weeks later mr speaker the president of the united states he addressed congress he was more popular than ever and what became known as the reagan revolution was underway while cutting taxes the reagans themselves spent lavishly to restore an aura of glamour and glitz to the white house breaking with the past president reagan nominated the first woman to the united states supreme court he dealt a devastating blow to union labor when he broke the air controller strike by setting a deadline then firing them all and if they do not report for work within 48 hours they have forfeited their jobs and will be terminated in world affairs he launched a huge us military buildup he rejected dayton with the soviet union which he called an evil empire they are the focus of evil in the modern world to the dismay of the soviets and many who described themselves as peace lovers in america reagan proposed his star wars scheme a multi-billion dollar effort which he called a defensive shield against nuclear weapons in space it wasn't until his second term that he met with the soviet leader but in 1985 he and mikhail gorbachev began a partnership that culminated in the first arms treaty to actually reduce the number of nuclear weapons and a few years later when communism began to crumble many gave credit to long-standing policies accelerated by president reagan mr gorbachev tear down this wall elsewhere his foreign policy was dogged with confusion and tragedy he sent u.s troops to lebanon only to withdraw them after 241 american servicemen died in an iranian-sponsored suicide bombing still he was praised for his warmth and dignity as he comforted the servicemen's families i never took a penny that didn't belong

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i never took a penny that didn't belong to me later he was embarrassed by a national security aide oliver north and others who admitted secretly trading arms to iran diverting the proceeds via swiss banks to nicaraguan contras and lying to congress to cover it all up investigators said president reagan approved at least some of these secret dealings but he pleaded ignorance i did not know what had happened or whether there had been a diversion or any money to divert what became known as the iran contra scandal tarnished his second term but did not destroy his popularity riding horseback and doing chores on his ranch he kept his all-american image intact and his optimism never flagged my fellow citizens our nation is poised for greatness we must do what we know is right and do it with all our might let history say of us these were golden years when the american revolution was reborn when freedom gained new life and america reached for her best ronald reagan left office with the economy booming a recession was right around the corner but as he left the economy was up the deficit was soaring and his public approval rating was higher than any other modern president he retired to california where he dedicated his presidential library along with four other living presidents a firm believer in happy endings his own last scenes were touched by sadness in

1994 he revealed he was suffering from alzheimer's disease he wrote a farewell letter to the american people saying i now begin the journey that will take me into the sunset of my life i know that for america there will always be a bright dawn ahead [Music] for those of you who may be joining us in progress president ronald reagan has died

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died the cheerful crusader who devoted his presidency to winning the cold war trying to scale back what he saw as a government far too big and making people believe it was morning again in america he died today after a long twilight struggle with alzheimer's disease a family friend said that he died peacefully this afternoon he was 93 years old he died at home in california the white house was told that his health had taken a turn for the worse over the last several days president bush was alerted today president bush is in france for the commemoration of d-day and no doubt we'll be hearing from the president sometime as the day goes along president bush five years after leaving office the nation's 40th president told the world in november of 1994 that he had been diagnosed with the early stages of alzheimer's an incurable disease that destroys brain cells the president said he had begun quote the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life and today that sunset came we go down to los angeles california and cbs news correspondent jerry bowen jerry well diane reporters began their vigil at the reagan home in bel air this morning as the word leaked out and finally the confirmation came that the president's health was failing and that this afternoon he had died with him was his wife nancy and two of their three children he was 93 as you mentioned he'd been suffering from alzheimer's for nearly a decade and because of that disease he was denied the retirement that he had envisioned days spent with his close circle of friends were in the wild wide open spaces of the ranch that he had near santa barbara california it was the west as mr reagan knew it that helped shape his vision of america a land where he believed the american dream was possible for anyone who worked hard enough to get it after all he'd come from humble beginnings to become the most powerful man on earth and when he left that office he headed home

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january 20th 1989 inauguration day ronald reagan was suddenly a former president making the long cross-country flight back to california back to the state where he'd forged his political career will there be an adjustment period for you and for mrs reagan i haven't even thought about anything of that kind i don't use the word retirement i think there are a lot of things you have to be done you wouldn't go back to the movies i mean even certainly in a cameo rule i mean all right there's a kind of a lingering feeling that that would look a little bit like kind of cash in on this job that i've had [Music] the homecoming would prove bittersweet there was a problem that first year back the nagging perception the reagans were cashing in on their washington years ron and nancy are home their california retirement home a two and a half million dollar hilltop ranch house in exclusive bel air was a gift from 20 wealthy friends the reagans paid them back but the appearance of impropriety lingered i've been out of work for six months and maybe there's a future here as the former sportscaster joked about his job prospects at the 1989 all-star game he was already well into a lucrative public speaking career 50 000 per appearance but it was a trip to japan in october of 1989 that provoked the most stinging comments for two 20-minute speeches and a few public appearances mr reagan was paid two million dollars by a japanese conglomerate we're allies but we're more than allies we're friends back home mr reagan could not escape a hangover from his administration the iran contra scandal aides were being tried for the illegal scheme to sell weapons to iran and give the profits to nicaraguan gorillas as president he denied approving it in a deposition for one trial the former president had trouble remembering details you were not aware

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remembering details you were not aware and did not learn of norse activities in supplying the contracts with military aid is that correct well i'm not sure i'm understanding this years later there was speculation this courtroom appearance revealed signs of the disease that would eventually rob him of his memory but he

continued to lead a very public life including the 1991 dedication of his presidential library in simi valley california it was an historic occasion for the first time five u.s presidents were brought together and for one more time the president revered as the great communicator shared his view of the world the iron curtain has rusted away totalitarianism is melting like snow mr reagan spent as much time as he could at his ranch near santa barbara hosting dignitaries he'd first met on the world stage the ranch was still reagan's great escape but he could not escape what was happening to him slowly perceptibly he was undergoing a wrenching change these were among his last public appearances his 1994 birthday celebration the funeral of richard nixon that same year the year mr reagan made a stunning admission in a handwritten letter to the american people he'd been diagnosed with alzheimer's i now begin the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life he wrote i know that for america there will always be a bright dawn ahead as mr reagan began his involuntary retreat from the public eye his daughter maureen became an outspoken advocate for alzheimer's research it is an equal opportunity disease and it doesn't make special arrangements for former presidents or first ladies and nancy reagan who had protected her husband at his image throughout their long marriage became his voice and his ambassador and

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became his voice and his ambassador and i'd like to propose a toast to my my fella she went alone to his birthday celebrations and the commissioning of the uss ronald reagan she mourned alone at the funeral of his daughter maureen the former president remembered by millions had become a man with no memories of his own unable to share the major moments of his own life back in 1989 i think there are a lot of things you have to be done on that cross-country plane trip the day he left office the former president had mused about going home california isn't a place in my mind it's a way of life his idea of the california dream a dream that faded all too quickly beyond sunset into darkness mr reagan's body will be moved to a mortuary near his home and then will be taken to the reagan library probably tomorrow in simi valley the hilltop hilltop library where the public may come to pay its respects then the body will be flown to washington to lion state in the capitol the funeral service will be in the national cathedral mr reagan will make his final journey to california to be buried on that hilltop overlooking the west dan jerry boyne reporting from los angeles ronald reagan dead at age 93 jerry just before you go to do some more reporting has there been an announcement about the official cause of death we know the president was suffering from an alzheimer's disease he'd had about with a colon polyp in his medical history any official notification about the cause of death there has been no official word on the exact cause of death we do know that the nature of this disease is that eventually it shuts the body down thanks jerry as jerry bowen has pointed out there will be about a four day period now of mourning for president reagan and funeral services as mentioned

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reagan and funeral services as mentioned there'll be one in the national cathedral in washington d.c and the president of course will be buried in california ronald reagan was elected president for the first time at age 69 he was the oldest man ever elected to that office he maintained a sunny atmosphere it was one of the keys to his having two full terms in the presidency a kind of thumbs-up demeanor despite several bouts of illnesses during and after his presidency and of course who can forget that just after his election in 1980 the president was the target of assassin's bullets he barely survived was very nearly killed he had his difficulties over the years but as it turned out he's lived longer than any other president of the united states dead today at age 93. cbs news chief white house correspondent john roberts is traveling with the presidential party of president george w bush in france where this weekend was set aside for the commemoration of d-day the invasion that resulted in the freeing of europe from nazi tyranny and john joins us live now from france john good evening to you dan and uh certainly the news of president reagan's death is going to overshadow the d-day ceremonies that were planned for tomorrow morning there was to be and will still be a bilateral uh ceremony tomorrow morning with president bush and french president jacques rock but certainly dan at this point everyone's thoughts are going to be turning to the 40th president of the united states uh it had been rumored for some time that uh that president reagan was uh was on on a downhill cycle that he had been

sick with alzheimer's disease for a decade typically people who develop alzheimer's disease reaching back to my uh i had as a medical correspondent damn become bedridden and the big danger with people who were

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and the big danger with people who were in bed for an awfully long period of time is that they finally develop pneumonia and pass on word that president reagan was becoming gravely ill has been circulating for some time we do know that the family has been making ongoing funeral arrangements obviously it would be a very large ceremony and there's a lot of logistics to plan so they have been making those plans to get a lot of dignitaries uh probably the president of the united states out there to california for the uh the funeral of course there would be the lying state as well in the capitol rotunda to take care of so we do know that there have been these uh ongoing plans uh word though that uh president reagan was near the end came uh earlier today when president bush was traveling on his way from rome uh where he had been meeting with italian prime minister silvio berlusconi uh here to france a white house spokesman came back and said that a family source and said that the president was uh near the end then we learned that at 4 10 eastern time this afternoon ronald reagan's former chief of staff fred ryan called chief of staff for president bush andrew cardin said ronald reagan had passed on dan john roberts reporting live from normandy we go down to paris and cbs news correspondent bill plant bill plant covered uh ronald reagan for many years he's one of the most knowledgeable people in the country about ronald reagan and his presidency bill if you're there let's review what ronald reagan always considered to be his major accomplishments as president dan ronald reagan was a guy who came to government to shrink it he wanted less government but the face that he presented to the public didn't appear to be that of a cost cutter or a radical conservative it was a friendly face and he succeeded beyond conservatives wildest dreams in shrinking the size of government partly by spending so much there was no lab no money left he enjoyed defying expectations dan

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he enjoyed defying expectations dan they used to say in california when he was governor with ronald reagan what you see is what you get he was willing to negotiate he was not a hard ideologue and he always had as i'm sure you've already noted that sunny optimism which looked forward never back he had other people to do all his worrying and all his score settling for him he never troubled himself with that and in that sense he was an amazingly unpolite unpolitical politician he had political instincts he knew how to deal with people but he didn't have the average politicians need to be loved he didn't need the adulation that most politicians do he was i guess satisfied from a lifelong uh for acting all those years he was a guy who was very sure of himself didn't need the kind of public reassurance that so many other public figures do and that's one of the things that served him so well dan bill plant reporting live from paris bill plant who covered ronald reagan's ascendancy of the presidency and then covered him in the white house during his presidency for the full eight years of that presidency thanks bill plan we go now via telephone to evan morris one of the many biographers of president reagan are you there mr yes mr either adam tell us what you think of the most important things to know as we look back on the reagan presidency and mourn the death of this truly extraordinary man who was elected to two full terms of the presidency elected by an absolute landslide for his second term well i feel that a large part of the earth has crumbled away um there was something epic about reagan and his sheer historic size uh which was why he was such a controversial figure as governor and um through most of his two terms as

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through most of his two terms as president but in retrospect um he's loomed larger and larger in my opinion and the fact that he um so solidly stood at the end of the last century makes him seem from our point of point of view now at the beginning of this one to have been one of the most substantial presidents of that century in my opinion the greatest since harry truman we're speaking live now with edmond morris by telephone remembering ronald reagan who died today at the age of 93. mr morris historians as just say play these

games but they they rate presidents and correct me if i'm wrong it's been for a long while a consensus that the two most effective the two greatest american presidents were the father of the country george washington and the man who saved the union abraham lincoln and then different historians will differ about how the rankings go below that as we talked today on the day that president ronald reagan has died where does he fit in the pantheon of american presidents and in over the next 25 50 100 years all we can do is speculate where do you think he's going to be rated i don't like to speculate about things like that it's too soon but i will say that a measure of the largeness of ronald reagan is the things around us that we no longer see because of his presidency for example where is soviet communism where is the berlin wall where is national malaise where is double-digit inflation where is our contempt for and our embarrassment about the american military um these and many other positive achievements of ronald reagan

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achievements of ronald reagan uh we now feel simply by their absence it's what we no longer see in the world that testifies to the way he changed things in writing your biography of ronald reagan you spent a lot of time with him and we all know that ronald reagan was a great storyteller he was a great narrator what's your own favorite story from ronald reagan's collection there's quite a few i wouldn't want to repeat on the air um [Music] well i'll tell you something that touched me very much when i was talking to him once in the oval office i asked him if he wasn't sort of wistful about his lost theatrical and cinematic career and i said don't you ever have a hankering to get back on the stage and he looked really surprised by the question he said whoa no why should i i have the biggest stage in the world right here edmond morris biographer of ronald reagan who died today at the age of 93. thank you for being with us mr thank you for president ronald reagan politics was a second career as he'd been morris just pointed out and as everyone of memory age during the reagan years knows the future president honed his communication skills as a hollywood actor cbs's john blackstone looks back now at the life of ronald reagan act one good evening everybody this is andy mccain with some hot news right off the grid ronald reagan wasn't headed for hollywood when he headed west in 1937 and it wasn't for the movies it was for radio chicago sent by his iowa radio station to cover the chicago cubs spring training on catalina island but a friend introduced him to an agent who got him a screen test which won him a meeting at warner brothers with jack warner himself an agent called him said there's a chap out here from des moines highway who as

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out here from des moines highway who as i understood him to say he was a sports radio announcer in coins his name was ronald reagan i said fine bring him over and let me say hello to him what was it mr warner that caught your eye when you looked at that first test of reagan well he had his personality projected in what we as i term it off the screen into the into the to the audience it kind of comes through he had a good smile happy delivery hello i want to hear some good news that film persona the good-looking all-american easy-going guy fit him like a glove and he fit right in at the film factory eventually churning out more than 50 pictures eight in 1938 alone then where are we my friend high and dry that's the last drink reagan called himself the errol flynn of the b movies but the truth is he mostly didn't get the girl yeah it's judy you know doc i've loved it for a long time but i can't help her now because well you're the one man so be nice to her with you but he did get a wife just something i forgot to do his first jane wyman and he did play bit parts in a movies with the biggest stars of the day movie after movie year after year regarded not as a star but steady his career got a big boost from a supporting role football legend george gipp in newt rockne all american rock someday well we'll play the rest of that at some future time during our coverage of what transpires over the next three or four days with president ronald reagan dead at age of 93 but that gave you some sense of act one of ronald reagan the man in development the man who developed into a two-term and very popular american president

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american president one of the things that's often said about president reagan is that he had perhaps the best personality the sunniest personality of any american president some would argue that theodore roosevelt also had a sunny personality but however one writes it president reagan had that sunny smile great optimism forward-looking never seemed to meet a stranger didn't seem to carry a grudge was slow almost impossible to anger and there's a long list of accomplishments during his presidency one cannot speak for him of course but having spoken to him some over the years read a good deal about him i think it's fair to say that among the things that president reagan would like to have pointed out about his two terms as president during the 1980s is number one his absolutely unrelenting determination to defeat communism as it was personified in the soviet union number two that he did indeed shrink the size of the government instituted what we now call deregulation on a wide and deep scale number three that he presided over a consensus for the shoring up of defense of the united states that ronald reagan was a believer that the military during his time needed to be revitalized and rebuilt and indeed he did that during his presidency now details and timing of president reagan's funeral have not yet been officially announced but it is expected that he will first lie in repose at the reagan library in simi valley california and then later in the rotunda of the united states capitol before a state funeral at the national cathedral president reagan is to be buried on the grounds of the reagan library in california and of course be more about this on your local news on this cbs station on the cbs saturday news and there will be a special program

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news and there will be a special program on cbs later this evening during prime time as we reflect upon and mourn the presidency of ronald reagan and his death this afternoon at age 93. for the moment i'm dan rather in new york now we return you to cbs sports and live coverage of golf you

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